

ANNUAL  
REPORT

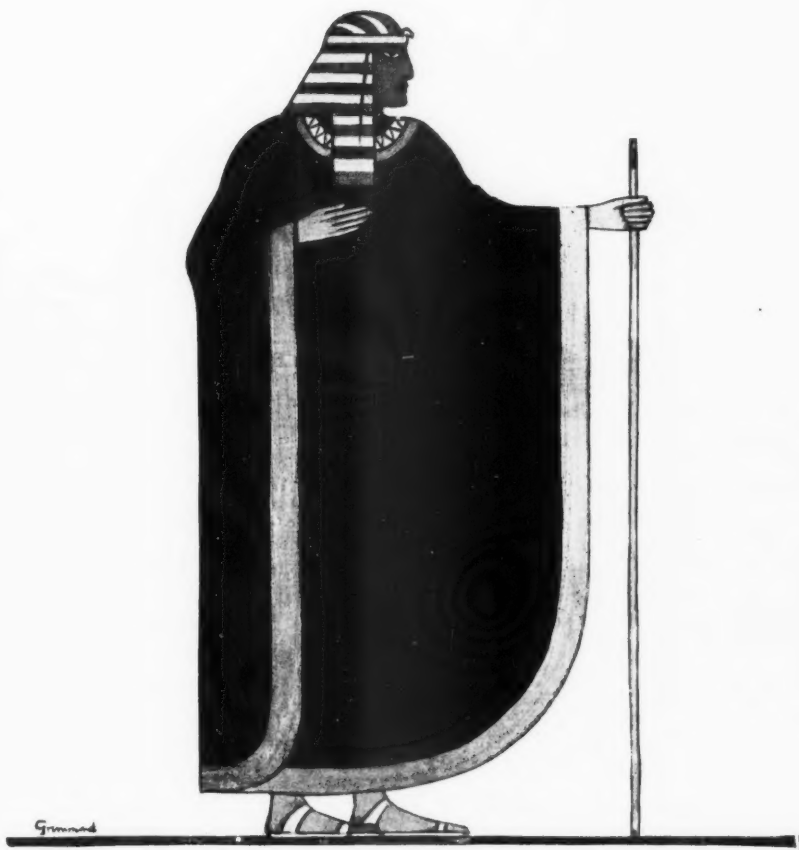
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MONTHLY

# DRAMA

New Series

AUGUST M·CM·XXI

Number 10



DESIGN BY WILLIAM  
GRIMMOND FOR THE  
NOD OF OSIRIS. See  
page 80.

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# ANNUAL REPORT

**I**N submitting the second Annual Report of the British Drama League, the Council feels that, as before, the clearest idea of the year's work can be given by grouping the various operations of the League under the headings of the Committees responsible for these operations.

*Drama and Education.*—The League has in the first place been concerned with carrying on the policy outlined in the Deputation to the Minister of Education which took place on March 13th, 1920. It will be remembered that in the Rider to Resolution 3 presented at that Deputation it was stated that "The League wishes to emphasise the need of recognition of the importance of the Drama as an element in the curriculum in Colleges and Training Schools." Following that Resolution, Mr. Fisher desired the League to consult with the Department concerned, and the League's Committee nominated Miss Fogerty, Miss Gilpin, Mr. E. J. Dent, and Mr. Ben Greet, to meet certain Principals of Training Colleges and discuss means whereby the Drama might be more adequately recognised. At this meeting it was suggested that the League's Committee should draw up a series of definite proposals to be laid before representatives of Training Colleges at their Annual Conference. Recommendations were subsequently drawn up, and after a further consultation with the Board of Education, were duly presented at the Conference of Training Colleges held on Tuesday, November 30th, 1920. These recommendations were printed as a Memorandum in the January number of "Drama," a copy of which was sent to every Training College. Though the Teachers' Association as a whole has been unable to make any recommendation in the matter it is believed that the memorandum will have considerable influence on the individual colleges. Salisbury Training College has already taken definite action in the matter, as also the Theological Section, King's College. There is indeed no doubt that the teachers are in full sympathy with the views expressed in the Memorandum, but the League's Committee feel it is very desirable that some further action should be taken by the Board of Education to place the teaching of the dramatic method in Training Colleges on a more efficient and permanent basis.

The League was represented at the Conference of Educational Associations held at University College, Gower Street, on January 6th, when a Conference on "The Vulgar Tongue" was addressed by Miss Elsie Fogerty and Dr. Boas under the chairmanship of Miss Lilian Braithwaite. This meeting resulted in a considerable accession of members to the League and gave renewed evidence of the keenness on the part of Educationists and Teachers for information on the place of Drama in Education.

It should also be mentioned that the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art has been empowered to apply for affiliation to London University.

In spite of the progress shown in the cases above mentioned, the Education Committee could not be unaware of the serious set-back suffered by the movement in general owing to the inability of the Education Committee of the London County Council to renew the grant made in support of the performances of Shakespeare recently given for the benefit of L.C.C. children in school hours and as part of their normal school curriculum. Though the L.C.C. Education Committee itself is unanimously in favour of the continuance of these performances, their Auditor has felt it impossible on legal grounds to renew the grant made last year. It is hoped that a reversal of the Auditor's decision may be obtained in time to renew the performances for 1922-1923. It is impossible, however, that public money can be obtained for the

coming season 1921-1922, and the Central Shakespeare Committee are therefore organising an Emergency Fund to which the teachers and school children are being invited to contribute. The Drama League has been asked to support this fund by laying its claims before the general public, and arrangements have been made for a meeting at the Great Hall, King's College, to inaugurate an appeal for this object.

*Professional Acting.*—A meeting was convened by the Drama League on January 24th at the Haymarket Theatre, by kind permission of Mr. Frederick Harrison, to consider the question of the Sunday Opening of Theatres. For some time previously this question had been much in debate owing to a suggestion made by Mr. Arthur Bouchier and others that theatrical performances with a charitable object might be allowed on Sunday afternoons. The Actors' Association had taken a very strong line against the proposal; at the same time the Association of Theatrical Managers were believed to be favourable to it, and in view of competition by the Cinema, as well as for other reasons, there was clearly a case to be made for the proposed extension. In the doubtful state of public opinion it was felt that this was a matter on which a disinterested body like the Drama League might well arrange a discussion, and a public meeting was accordingly convened, as above mentioned. Viscount Burnham presided at the meeting, and the speakers included Canon Adderley, Mr. Arthur Bouchier, Mr. Alfred Lugg (representing the Actors' Association), Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Lord Willoughby de Broke. Representatives of the following organisations also spoke from the platform:—National Association of Theatrical Employees, National Orchestral Union, the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the Early Closing Association. The motion in favour of Sunday Opening was moved and seconded by Mr. Arthur Bouchier and Canon Adderley. It was soon evident that the majority of the meeting were strongly opposed to the proposal in any form, and the motion was lost by a large majority.

The League was officially represented at the opening of the Students' Theatre at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales on the afternoon of Friday, May 27th, and must congratulate the Academy on the acquisition of a Royal Charter and of a Theatre which should be of very great use in the Training for the Professional Stage.

*Community Theatre.*—The Autumn Conference of Affiliated Societies was held at Leeds on November 13th. This was attended by representatives of the Ashburton Group, Bath Playgoers, Birmingham University Literary and Dramatic Society, Collingham Players, Lancaster Footlights Club, Little Movement Nottingham, Manchester Playgoers' Club, New Earswick Dramatic Society, Sheffield Playgoers, Rossington Dramatic Society, Stockport Garrick Society, Unnamed Society, Village Clubs' Association, and the Wallsend Shakespeare Players. The matters discussed included the question of interchange of plays among affiliated societies and fees payable by Dramatic Societies to dramatic authors.

In the first instance a system has been introduced for the interchange of plays through the medium of the magazine; and in the second place the suggestion that royalties should be paid to authors rather than definite fees, has been laid before the Authors' Society and is now under consideration by that body. In this connection it should be noted that Mr. Bernard Shaw has publicly espoused the cause of those permanent societies or community theatres who desire to pay royalties rather than fees, and an article on this subject by him has been printed in "Drama."

The thanks of the League are due to Mr. T. R. Dawes, Secretary for Yorkshire, for his able organisation of the Leeds Conference, which was followed by a largely attended public meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. T. B. Duncan, ex-Lord Mayor of Leeds.

Further meetings through the year were held at Bath, Bristol, Camberwell, Epping, Leeds, Oxford, North Kensington, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, Southwark, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick, and Welwyn. These were addressed by, among others, Mr. Granville Barker, Mr. John Drinkwater, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mrs. Hucks, Mr. Stanley

Just, Miss Gwen John, Miss Gertrude Kingston, Mr. W. H. Kerridge, Mr. Lee Mathews, Mr. Charles Morgan (President of the O.U.D.S.), Mr. Nigel Playfair, Miss Magdalen Ponsonby, Mr. Albert Rutherford, Mr. Mordaunt Shairp, Mr. Sladen Smith, Miss Viola Tree, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth.

The number of affiliated groups at the date of this report number 118 as against 54 at the same date last year.

*Repertory Theatre.*—The Repertory Theatre Committee was specially convened on January 27th to consider the proposal of Mr. W. H. Kerridge for the inauguration of the proposed Co-operative Operatic and Dramatic Association. The Committee was of the opinion that this movement is worthy of the League's support. Mr. Kerridge has now completed the preliminaries of his organisation which is being affiliated with the Co-operative Union, and is to have its registered office at the address of the British Drama League. The League is closely in touch with possible developments.

*Foreign Drama.*—Owing to the continued International Unrest the arrangements for an International Conference have had to be postponed, and it is felt that the work of the Foreign Drama Committee cannot be satisfactorily commenced until more adequate secretarial organisation is available. Mr. E. J. Dent visited Germany in the Spring of the present year, and has arranged to give a lecture on the "Modern Theatre Movement in Germany" in connection with the Annual Meeting of the League. The invitation of the Secretary of the Genossenschaft Deutscher Bühnen-Angehörigen that the League should provide an official account of the state of the English Theatre for inclusion in the celebration number of their publication "Der neue Weg," has been accepted.

*Plays and Publications.*—The Plays and Publications Committee has drawn up a list of selected plays for Community Theatres, Schools, etc. Arrangements have been concluded with the Poetry Bookshop whereby this list should be published on behalf of the Drama League as one of the series of monthly Chap-books issued by that Firm. The list is now published under the title of "Commendable Plays" at 1s. 6d. net. Copies for members of the Drama League can be obtained through the League only at the price of 1s.

The present year has seen the publication of "Drama" on a new basis as a monthly bulletin, and the result has proved not unsatisfactory. The Council trusts that all affiliated societies will take advantage of the scheme by which their individual members may obtain the magazine at half-price. So far 17 societies take copies on this basis. It is felt that the circulation of the magazine could easily be doubled if other societies would co-operate.

*Finance.*—The financial situation of the League is most clearly summed up in the summary of receipts and payments sent to every member. The membership of the society is practically identical with that of the former year, the resignations which have taken place being balanced by new members. It will be seen that a great saving has been effected on working the magazine, which last year resulted in a loss of £293 12s. 7d., in addition to fees to contributors. It is necessary to point out, however, that what is apparently a more favourable situation is due not so much to an increase of ordinary subscriptions as to the kindness of several generous patrons of the League whose donations are set forth at the end of this report, and to the fruitful suggestion of Mrs. Geoffrey Whitworth who with the help of Miss Elizabeth Fagan and a most energetic Ball Committee organised the Beggar's Opera Ball which took place on January 14 and which benefited the funds of the League to the extent of £490. Without these abnormal additions the balance-sheet would have shown a very different result. On its present membership the financial position of the League cannot therefore be regarded as satisfactory, and the Council would point out that at least a thousand members are needed to render the League, even on the most modest scale of working, self-supporting. They feel that no effort should be spared to attain this number of one guinea subscribers during the coming year.



*General Organisation.*—Under this heading must be recorded the transference of the office of the League from Dudley House to the present more convenient and commodious offices at 10, King Street, Covent Garden. Besides many other advantages, there is now accommodation for a small library and a private room for interviews and Committee Meetings. The League is also able to give hospitality to the office organisations of the "Play Actors" and "Pioneer Players."

As regards the Library, the Council have the pleasure to report two valuable gifts; the first being that from Miss Horniman, consisting of her entire library of plays and annotated prompt copies as used by her during her tenancy of the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. These plays are now available on loan to members of affiliated societies, and a complete list has been published in No. 8 of the magazine "Drama." The second gift was a collection of valuable theatre publications, mostly French, donated by Mr. H. M. Paull. The Information Bureau of the League has been able to give general assistance to the National Council of Social Service, the London Council of Public Morality, the Village Clubs Association, the League of Arts, the Warriors' Day Committee, as well as to many smaller societies and to individuals. The work entailed by these activities is increasing from week to week.

*Special Committee.*—It being evident that several sections of the League's original programme had been unavoidably allowed to lapse, the Council decided to appoint a Special Committee with a view to exploring the possibilities of a further extension of the League's work and influence. This Committee was constituted in January, 1921, with the following members:—Mr. Charles Tennyson, Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Granville Barker, Mr. Arnold Bennett, Mr. Fisher White, Mr. Lee Mathews, Mr. Albert Rutherford, Mr. W. J. Turner, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The Committee met in all six times, and has submitted a report to the Council which has been adopted by them and is printed in the July number of "Drama." The attention of members is specially directed to this report, which makes three important recommendations, (1) in regard to an improved Information Bureau, (2) a possible Theatre Club in London, and (3) the extension of the League's policy so as definitely to include propaganda for a National Theatre.

In conclusion, the Council wishes to renew its sincere thanks to the co-opted members of the various committees for the valuable and ungrudging help given both in committee and outside. Without this help the work of the League would have been impossible.

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THE JOURNAL OF  
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*Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal*

ON another page we print a short account of the Annual Meeting. The Congress, however, included other fixtures, and we were glad to welcome many friends at the Shakespeare for Schools meeting at King's College on the day previous to the annual meeting. Mr. Bernard Shaw unexpectedly spoke from the platform, and to him and to the others speakers—Miss Thorndike, Miss Bransom, Sir Cyril Cobb, the Rev. Stewart Headlam, Mr. Littlewood, and to Sir Israel Gollancz (who presided) we are duly grateful. As for the result of the meeting, it was a pleasure to hear from Mr. E. H. Stokes, Hon. Treasurer of the London Central Shakespeare Committee, in these terms: "As you know," he writes, "following the Drama League meeting we have received widespread notice through the press, and I really feel that we are receiving a measure of public support which will save us, at least, from extinction during the coming season."

Who will follow Sir Arthur Acland's good example and send us £5 5s. for the Shakespeare for Schools Fund?

The National Theatre Resolution was most ably put to the Annual Meeting by Mr. J. R. Clynes. Our only regret was Sir Martin Harvey's enforced absence. "I have," he wrote, "the National Theatre at heart, and am bitterly sorry I can do nothing to help it at the moment beyond subscribing most fully to the words of the Resolution." Everyone will be glad to know that the indisposition which prevented Sir Martin's presence at the meeting is now a thing of the past.

The Reception given on the evening of July 1 by the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art was enjoyed by a large number of guests. H.R.H. Princess Louise graced the evening by her presence, and Miss Elsie Fogerty's recital and play were notable features of the evening's entertainment.

Mr. E. J. Dent's lecture on modern German Drama was an intensely interesting prelude to the Reception.

Miss Constance Radford, the Hon. Secretary of the Sheffield Playgoers, writes: "This year I am pleased to say we are able to increase our subscription to £2 2s. . . . We feel the work of the League is so important, and we must do what we can to support it when we are able." The value of such a letter lies in the fact that it was entirely unsolicited. Needless to say we highly appreciate such proof that those who make up the League are feeling that its work is being justified.

From time to time we are greatly indebted to voluntary workers in our Central Office. Mrs. Alan Gardiner, Miss Darrell, and Miss Julia Strachey have all rendered noble service during the past twelve months.

Owing to the holiday season DRAMA will not be published for September. The October number will be enlarged by a special literary supplement. The Office will be closed, except for urgent correspondence, from August 1st—22nd.

# THE ANNUAL MEETING

Mr. Charles Tennyson occupied the chair at the annual general meeting and conference of the British Drama League held, by permission of Lord Howard de Walden, at Seaford House, Belgrave Square, on Friday afternoon, July 1. The chair was afterwards taken by Mr. J. Fisher White.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Tennyson said the League had a strong backing in the country, and was in touch with some 120 dramatic societies. He outlined the objects of the League, which was to act as a central organisation in all matters connected with the drama. It was hoped to build up the League's bureau of information, for instance, into a world-wide application; and they were also greatly concerned with the drama as an educative force.

## A THEATRE CLUB.

After the annual report and balance sheet had been read the members of the Council were re-elected *en bloc*. Miss Lena Ashwell then proposed the following resolution:—

"That a committee be appointed to report to the Council of the British Drama League on the practical working and constitution of a club in London on a basis in conformity with the aims of the League."

The resolution, as originally framed, also contained the words "and that the Council be then empowered to take such action as it thinks fit to found the club on these lines," but this sentence was deleted on the amendment of Mr. Bernard Shaw, who suggested that it would give the Council too much of a free hand.

Miss Lena Ashwell said that the club, which would be for both sexes, would be the first club of the kind in the world. It would serve not only as a social meeting-place, but also as a centre of information where one could learn what was going on in the theatrical world abroad, or discuss costumes for modern or other plays. It was one of the peculiarities of the theatres that their clubs had hitherto been exclusively men's clubs, with very definite ideas on the question of women being admitted. She suggested a club or institution on the lines of the Burlington Fine Arts Club or the Royal Society of Medicine. At any rate, something should be done to organise their forces so as to be ready for the time, which would surely come one of these days, when we got a Minister of Fine Arts in this country.

Mr. Lee Mathews seconded the resolu-

tion, and during the discussion Mr. Whitworth emphasized the point that the proposed club would not interfere with the present operations of the League. One could be a member of the League, for instance, without necessarily joining the club.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

## AUTHOR'S FEES.

Mr. Bernard Shaw proposed the following resolution:—

"That this meeting of the British Drama League appeals to the Society of Authors, Playwrights, and Composers, and to playwrights generally, to extend to all dramatic enterprises which have for their object the establishment of permanent local theatres and which devote the profits of their performances to funds for that purpose, the terms and privileges enjoyed by ordinary commercial speculations; and the meeting further appeals to the directors of such enterprises to qualify themselves for such terms by adopting a constitution and rules making it clear that they are permanent bodies and that the destination of their profits to dramatic purposes is obligatory."

Mr. Shaw explained this resolution in his lucid and witty fashion, and related an amusing experience illustrating the difference between amateur and professional fees. "The ordinary terms to the author for a production of his play are one shilling in the pound. On one occasion I gave a gentleman this information, and he took £2 4s. 6d. as the result of the show. He wrote saying he did not quite understand the principle, but enclosed a cheque for seven guineas. He was astonished when I accepted 2s. 6d., and sent him back the change. If that had been an amateur performance, I should have got five pounds."

In seconding the resolution Miss De Reyes, of the Bath Citizen Players, made an eloquent plea for the recognition of those Community Groups and Theatres which were doing so much for the spiritual and artistic education of the people.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

## A NATIONAL THEATRE.

Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., then proposed the following resolution:—

"That as Great Britain stands almost alone among civilised communities in her lack of a National Theatre supported by



public funds, and seeking no profit but the enhancement of dramatic art, this meeting resolves that the Government should be asked to give formal recognition to the attempt to establish a National Theatre; and with a view to a practical result the Government should be asked to initiate an inquiry into the whole subject. As the interest of the Drama League and its constituent bodies must naturally centre in such a significant achievement, the members of the League pledge themselves to its encouragement by every means in their power."

Mr. Clynes said that he had no particular qualifications which entitled him to submit or defend such an important resolution. He had a profound appreciation of the educative value of the written and spoken word in a play, however, and had had personal experience of the educative influence of the theatre. Some attempt had already been made to establish what was to be termed a national theatre through the agency of private benevolence, personal enthusiasm, and public appeals to those who could afford the money necessary for the project. That would not do at all. It would not be a national theatre. They could not have a great institution of the arts set up to endure unless there was behind it public support and public money. A national theatre should not be merely a place of entertainment. It would also be a nursery, a training ground, for the band of actors who would serve not only in London, but throughout the kingdom. The latter consideration would meet, to some extent, the possible objection of those who lived elsewhere to the national theatre being set up in London. Of course, it must be set up in London, the capital of the country, but the benefits of such a theatre would soon overflow into the provinces. At the moment, nothing could be done anywhere without the cry of economy being raised, but it should be remembered that the theatres were, and had been for some time past, a source of enormous revenue to the State. The entertainments tax, if used but to a very small degree, would provide all the money necessary for the establishment of a national theatre. There could be no greater memorial to the genius which had gone, or no greater encouragement to the genius yet to come than some such structure. A

national theatre was a natural duty for us to achieve, and, for his own part, it would be his pride and joy to advocate it wherever he went.

In seconding the resolution, Mr. J. Fisher White said that England was the only country in the world that had not a national theatre. Its absence meant a great deal to the actor; his artistic position was prejudiced because there was no public recognition of his art. The State recognised painting, and the municipalities literature and music, but the drama was left to its own devices to struggle with commercial competition, and so long as that was the case the drama was bound to suffer. In a national theatre any play could be put on that was for the artistic or moral good of the public. One of the first things the newly formed State of Czecho-Slovakia had done after the official end of the war had been to invite to their country a representative English theatrical company with four representative English plays. Such an invitation as that brought shame on us. The absence of the national theatre in England was a national disgrace.

Mr. Bernard Shaw said he wished to supplement Mr. Clynes's information in regard to the attempt already made to establish a national theatre. The project to establish the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre in celebration of the tercentenary in 1916 had not been entirely unsuccessful. The sum of £70,000 had been obtained, but it came in a single subscription, and the gentleman who subscribed it came from Hamburg! That sort of thing happened in this country whenever an appeal was made to the rich alone!

The presence of Mr. Clynes, who was a busy man, among them that afternoon showed that he thought it worth while to interest himself in the movement for a national theatre. "The Independent Liberals have not thought it worth while, and the Coalition Party—which includes in its ranks some of the most accomplished comedians in the country—has not thought it worth while! Mr. Clynes, who occupies Ministerial rank in the Labour Party, has thought it worth while, and so you know where to look for support." The inference was obvious. Mr. Clynes knew what the people needed and wanted, and the others did not.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

# NEWS FROM NORTH & SOUTH

## THE UNNAMED SOCIETY.

Early in April the Manchester Unnamed Society produced Mr. Sladen Smith's play "The Nod of Osiris." This has been acknowledged to be the Society's greatest success, while the Press, without exception, gave excellent notices, and the audiences were larger and more appreciative than ever before.

No better guide to the reason and purpose of the play could be found than the author's note, from which, by way of explanation, we quote:

"Anyone who takes the trouble to study, even sporadically, the religion of ancient Egypt, cannot fail to be impressed by the tremendous part played by signs and various supernatural wonders in the life of the people. Many of the self-same signs and wonders are in existence to-day."

"In this fantasy the fact that all psychic phenomena are not of necessity vulgar trickery is taken for granted. The actual value of these manifestations to the world and to the lives of men is quite another matter."

The impersonation of Rhampsinitus—keeper of the sacred cats—by Mr. G. Stanley Jast, was a triumph. He was quite extraordinarily virile and not one point of his excellent lines was missed! Mr. Eric Newton made his study of the Pharaoh so much a part of himself that one almost suspected him of having been in close contact with ancient Egyptian royalties in a former existence!

The success of the play hangs mainly on the interpretation of the part of Amenartas, the Royal Mother; and this was most excellently carried through by Mrs. Eastwood, of the Stockport Garrick Society. Each night she held the audience in all the most convincing speeches of the play in a most creditable manner.

Of the other impersonations the Editor cannot give me space to write. But it is only right to mention the names of Miss Dorothy Crosse, Mrs. Preston, Miss Gwen Marsden, Miss Winifred Branshall, Mr. J. W. Morley, and Mr. F. E. Doran, who all contributed so much to the general success of the play.

A chant composed by Mrs. Georgia Pearce added greatly to the emotional part of the play and was well sung.

On the whole the costumes were disappointing, and in very few cases caught the atmosphere of ancient Egypt. Those worn by the Pharaoh were very fine and decorative, but the women's costumes were poor and lacking in "form." The colour was good, but there was not sufficient general harmony.

And now and lastly for the statue of the god Osiris, for which no praise can be too great! A huge, nodding creature, utterly simple, yet mysterious and convincing, and giving just the right atmosphere at once. The *nod* was most effective, and the whole obviously the work of highly-trained stage artists, and the Unnamed Society at its best!

LOUISE HARBOURNE.

## COMING FIXTURES.

At Stratford-on-Avon the New Shakespeare Company will be playing throughout the month of August, while Miss Elsie Fogerty will be conducting her Summer School in the Town Hall from Aug. 15—27. All information can be obtained through the Drama League, London.

At Glastonbury there is an interesting Festival and Holiday School to be held from August 8—29. From Thursday, August 25, to Saturday, September 3, Mr. Rutland Boughton has arranged some particularly interesting performances and lectures. Music naturally looms largest in the programme. On Tuesday, August 30, for instance, there is a Concert of Music by Mr. Boughton, including a new Violin Sonata and the first complete performance of a new Cycle of Songs with accompaniment of strings. Also the choral ballet, *The Moon Maiden*. On Friday evening, August 26, Mr. John Drinkwater will give a reading of his new play *Cromwell*. Mr. E. J. Dent lectures on Elizabethan and Restoration music on August 27 and 29 respectively. Write for particulars to Goodall's Library, High Street, Glastonbury.

The Marlowe Dramatic Society announce four performances of *Arden of Faversham* (once attributed to Shakespeare) at the A.D.C. Theatre, Cambridge, from August 3—6 inclusive. Tickets may be had from Messrs. Metcalfe & Co., Trinity Street, Cambridge.

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